
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Learning English



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello I'm Rob. Welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm joined today by Finn. Hi Finn.

Finn

Hello Rob.

Rob

Today we're talking about something we have some **expertise** in or knowledge about. That's teaching English.

Finn

That's right Rob. We work on the BBC's Learning English website - hopefully giving people around the world a **helping hand** in learning a language that isn't the one they usually use.

Rob

Well hopefully we're about to make that learning journey a bit easier as we launch a brand new online course. But how long does it take someone to become a **fluent** speaker of English?

Finn

A good question Rob and one we'll try to answer today. We'll also be discussing some general ways to make learning English easier and explaining some learning-related vocabulary along the way. So let's get started Rob.

Rob

Hold your horses Finn – not so fast! I have a question to ask you first. According the last UK census taken in 2011, what percentage of the British population speaks a first language that is not English?

- a) 1.7%
- b) 7.7%
- c) 14.7%

Finn

That's an interesting one. My first guess is c) 14.7%.

Rob

We'll find out if you are right or wrong later. So now we can discuss how learning English is getting easier. Of course there are a huge number of publications – books, leaflets and magazines – that can help teach you but there are those people who say that you can't beat the real thing – a teacher. Someone who can explain a language to you **face-to-face**.

Finn

Yes but that comes at a cost and isn't always practical – you might not have a school nearby. That's why in the 21st Century, online seems to be the main method of learning. Technology is allowing the English language to come to you!

Rob

That's true and that's why we've launched a brand new English course that's available on a computer, tablet or mobile phone. It's aimed at intermediate learners and charts a **pathway** through the various aspects of the language.

Finn

We hope that by committing around 15 minutes a day to using it, a learner will see a real improvement in their English knowledge and skill. But as well as using the **resources** available online, how else can someone help themselves to get a better **grasp** – a better understanding - of English?

Rob

Well if someone wants to become a confident speaker of English, trainer Richard Hallows has some tips. Have a listen and see if you can hear what are the two main aspects of English that you need.

INSERT**Richard Hallows – trainer in speaking English**

I think there are lots of things, but most importantly, you've got to have a good range of vocabulary and grammar. You need to know lots of words, the more words you know the better, obviously, and similarly with grammar, the more grammar you have the better you can explain yourself. We also need to think about pronunciation - learners of English often worry about speaking like a native speaker... it's not necessary to have a native accent.

Rob

OK, so Richard says you need a good range – or a wide variety - of vocabulary and grammar. The more words you know the more you can say – and the more grammar you know, the better you can say it...

Finn

Or even write it! One other tip is don't try to sound like a **native** – so someone who speaks English as a first language. All these are things we aim to cover in our new course.

Rob

Our new course might be a big help to you if you need English for your work, or if you're studying in English, or if you're planning to visit or even live in the UK. The British government expects immigrants to reach ESOL Entry 3 or B1 level, before they can be granted citizenship. It's equivalent to being able to hold a reasonably confident basic conversation.

Finn

Well in the UK it's estimated that you need around 360 hours of study to get to that stage from not knowing any English at all. But this depends on a number of factors such as **motivation** – how much you want to learn.

Rob

And age can be a factor. Some experts say it's common for children under the age of 11 to be very **immersed** and be fluent in English in about six months.

But why should someone choose to learn English? This is something we've been asking you on our Facebook page.

Finn:

Oussama says: "It's like my passport. You need it wherever you go."

Rob

Suzuki says: "It is an international communication tool."

Finn

Ha thinks it's: "The key to getting a good job with a high salary."

Rob

And Denis says: "It's the language that opens doors overseas." Thanks for all of your messages.

Finn

But now Rob, I need to know if I got today's question right.

Rob

Yes. I asked you, according the last UK census taken in 2011, what percentage of the British population speaks a first language that is not English?

Finn

I said 14.7%.

Rob

You were wrong. The census found 7.7% per cent of people in the UK have a first language that is not English. That's 4.2 million people. Now Finn, could you remind us of some of the learning-related vocabulary that we've heard today.

Finn

Yes, we heard:

expertise
a helping hand
fluent
face-to-face
pathway
resources
grasp
native
motivation
immersed

Rob

Thanks. That's it for today. We hope you've enjoyed today's programme. Don't forget to check our new website at bbclearningenglish.com. We'll be back with another 6 Minute English next week. Happy learning!

Both

Bye.

Vocabulary

expertise

high level of skill or knowledge

a helping hand

assistance; help

fluent

(related to speaking) clear, accurate, wide-ranging and confident

face-to-face

communication with another person directly, in the same place

pathway

set of actions to follow in order to reach a particular goal

resources

(here) things such as activities, information or videos that can be used to help someone study

grasp

understand something so that you can use or do it properly

native

(here) a person who was born in a particular country

motivation

enthusiasm and interest in doing something

immersed

busy spending a lot of your time doing one thing